

From: Viveka
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/8/01 8:26pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Public comment follows:

Any remedy which includes Microsoft giving software away, or committing to write more software for other platforms (such as MacOS or Linux), will merely extend the MS monopoly, and so will be counterproductive.

MS currently holds **two** linked and self-reinforcing monopolies - over the OS, and over Office software.

Extending the MS Office monopoly will not help anyone.

As a consumer, I use Office only because I HAVE to. People constantly send me files in MS Office formats, and I need to be able to view and modify them in order to do business. I detest the MS Office interface design, and abhor the lack of stability and security in this software. Despite this, I have paid MS repeatedly over the years for their horrible software,

I would vastly prefer to be able to view and modify Office documents using other software of my choice, such as AppleWorks. However, I cannot, as Microsoft deliberately hide and obfuscate their file formats. This situation does not occur in other areas where MS does not hold a monopoly. I use the software of my choice to view and modify image files, web pages, maps with detailed geographic metadata - because other software vendors hold to the agreed IEEE standards.

The best way to provide competition, thereby benefiting consumers, is to take away Microsoft's means of preventing **other** companies from making software that is compatible with Microsoft's.

To do this, simply require Microsoft to document its file formats, in a timely and public manner. Straightforward mechanisms for doing this exist, under the auspices of international standards bodies such as the ISO and IEEE.

Other remedies based on the same principle (of reducing Microsoft's ability to raise barriers to entry) also make sense - such as completely removing their control over the desktop (currently held through restrictive license agreements).

The focus of any remedies should be to promote competition in the Office and OS markets, empowering consumers to make real choices, and forcing MS to compete on the quality of their software.

Regards,

Viveka Weiley,
embittered consumer who never wants to have to buy inferior MS software
again.